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eater who needed out-door relief. In her own fun, in the humor in which she feels at home, as in the following description of Miss Linnet, in "Janet's Repentance," there is something as delicate as in her wit there is something pointed and searching: —

"And as to her intellect, her friend Mrs. Pettifer often said, 'She did n't know a more sensible person to talk to than Mary Linnet. There was no one she liked better to come and take a quiet cup of tea with her, and read a little of Klopstock's Messiah. Mary Linnet had often told her a great deal of her mind when they were sitting together. She said there were many things to bear in every condition of life, and nothing should induce her to marry without a prospect of happiness. Once, when Mrs. Pettifer admired her wax flowers, she said, "Ah, Mrs. Pettifer, think of the beauties of nature!" She always spoke very prettily, did Mary Linnet; very different, indeed, from Rebecca.'"

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3. — *A Plea for the Queen's English; Stray Notes on Speaking and Spelling.* By HENRY ALFORD, D. D., Dean of Canterbury. Second Edition. London and New York: Alexander Strahan. 1865. 16mo. pp. xvi., 287.

It may seem late to undertake the criticism of a book the second edition of which has been already some time before the public. But the first edition, which appeared a few years since (in 1863), although not passing without some slight notice in our literary journals, attained no American circulation, and made no impression upon our community. The enterprise of the publisher has succeeded in procuring for the work in its new form so wide a currency among us, and in attracting to it so much attention, that it becomes worth while seriously to inquire into its merits, and estimate its right to be accepted as an authority. This, however, as much for the sake of challenging a popularity and consideration which may turn out undeserved, as from regard to the good or harm which the book is likely to do. For it makes no great pretensions to a wide scope, or to philosophic method and profundity. It styles itself "*Stray Notes on Speaking and Spelling*," and is composed of desultory and loosely connected remarks on errors and controverted points in orthography, orthoëpy, and grammar, written in part, as its author takes pains to inform us, at chance moments of leisure, in cars and eating-houses and other such places. Criticism, it is plain, should not be disarmed by such acknowledgments, since no man has a right to thrust his odd thoughts before us who cannot make them fully worth our acceptance. The *Stray Notes* grew by degrees into their present form. They were put together first into lectures, and then became a series of

articles in a weekly newspaper. These attracted much notice, and called out abundant correspondence and comment, so that the successive papers took on a shape in part controversial and replicatory. The same was their fate after their collection into a volume ; and the second edition is not a little altered from the first, under the process of criticism and reply. They have had, it will be seen, a rather peculiar history, calculated to provoke our curiosity. The author is an English divine, of considerable note as critical editor and commentator of the Greek text of the New Testament, and has also acquired some fame in his earlier years as a writer of verses. We should naturally, then, explain to ourselves the popularity which the work has won by the critical and scholarly ability and the elegant style it is found to display. Such qualities, added to the general and attractive interest of the subjects, ought to be enough to insure a notable career to even a heavier volume.

It is unfortunate, however, for the American student, who is desirous to draw from this source valuable instruction as to the best usage of his mother-tongue, that he finds himself repelled, almost at the start, by a violent ebullition of spite against his native country. The reverend author, namely, is engaged in magnifying his office as polisher of the habits of speech of English speakers, by showing the exceeding and deep-reaching importance of attention to niceties of diction ; and he holds up Americans to reprobation for "the character and history of the nation, its blunted sense of moral obligation and duty to man, its open disregard of conventional right where aggrandizement is to be obtained, and, I may now say, its reckless and fruitless maintenance of the most cruel and unprincipled war in the history of the world." (p. 6.) This, it is true, was written before Lee's surrender. Since the end of 1864 we have changed all that ; and, in our zeal after self-improvement, we can well afford to pardon a few hard words to a "dignitary of the Church of England," who has given his ardent sympathies to the cause of Secession and Slavery, provided only he shall make good his claim to be our instructor in his proper department. Still, we cannot but form the suspicion that our author is somewhat under the dominion of class and national prejudices, and either careless of seeking information as to subjects upon which he is very ready to offer his opinion, or not acute in judging and profiting by information obtained. And further, it cannot but seriously shake our confidence in his philological acumen to find that our dreadful example is intended to "serve to show" the horrified British nation "that language is no trifle"! Our astonished inquiries into the connection of such a warning with such a lesson bring us to see that the Dean attributes our viciousness to the infelicities of our speech, since "every important feature in a people's language is re-

flected in its character and history." We had always thought, it must be owned, that the "reflection" was in the opposite direction, — that character and history determined language. It is perhaps allowable to say, by a kind of figure, that a man's image in the glass is reflected in his person; and it is certain that, if we can make the image transcendently lovely, the man himself will be sure to turn out a beauty; only we cannot well reach the image save through the man himself. In like manner, if we can train the masses of a people to speak elegantly, doubtless we shall change their character vastly for the better; but the improvement will be only in a very subordinate degree due to the reflex action of language: it will rather be the direct effect of the process of education. Our suspicions of the soundness of our philological authority, thus aroused, are not precisely lulled to sleep by an examination of the other incentives he offers to exactness of speech. We are pointed to the example of the Apostle Peter, when accused by the bystanders of being a Galilean, on the ground of his Galilean dialect. "So that," says our author, "the fact of a provincial pronunciation was made use of to bring about the repentance of an erring Apostle." It is not easy to see the point of the argument here made. One might rather be tempted to infer that a provincial pronunciation is a good thing, and deserves encouragement, if it could become the means of so important a conversion; who knows but that our own local idioms, carefully nursed and duly displayed, may somehow be made to work out our salvation? But there is a worse difficulty behind; and really, if Mr. Alford were not a Dean and an editor of the New Testament text, we should be inclined to accuse him of neglecting his Bible. According to the received reading of the Evangelists, (we have not examined Dean Alford's edition,) the charge brought against the saint that he did not talk good Jerusalem Hebrew, had for its sole effect to draw from him a repetition of his former lying denial, along with a volley of oaths and curses (luckless Peter! he forgot that his native dialect would only show more distinctly in such an outbreak of passion); and it was the crowing of the cock that brought about his repentance. So that, after all, the lesson we learn must be that, if we will only repress our local peculiarities of speech, we shall be less exposed to being detected in our wickedness; or else, that we must beware of accusing any one of dialectic inaccuracies, lest thereby we drive him to greater enormity of sin. Our author has perverted, without appreciable gain, a text which would not bend to his purpose in its true form.

We are now tempted to examine the other case cited by the Dean in this department, and see whether it will not, perhaps, give us a higher idea of his qualifications as a critic of language. He speaks (p. 7 seq.)

of the spurious poems of Rowley as having been in part detected by their containing the word *its*, — a word which was not in good use in Rowley's time. So far, all is well. But then he goes on to discourse concerning the infrequency of *its* in early English, and the employment of *his* for it, evidently in total ignorance of the reason, namely, that *his* was in Anglo-Saxon, and hence also for a long time in English, the regular genitive case of *it* (A. S. *hit*), not less than of *he*; and that the introduction of *its* was a popular inaccuracy, a grammatical blunder, such as the introduction of *she's* for *her* would be now. To the general apprehension, *his* stood in the usual relation of a possessive case, formed by an added 's, to *he*, and had nothing to do with *it*; and so popular use manufactured a new regular possessive for *it*, which was finally, after a protracted struggle, received into cultivated and literary styles, and made good English. Hear, on the other hand, our author's explanation of the rarity of *its* during the period from Shakespeare to Milton: "The reason, I suppose, being, that possession, indicated by the possessive case *its*, seemed to imply a certain life or personality, which things neuter could hardly be thought of as having." A more fantastic and baseless suggestion is rarely made; it is so empty of meaning that we can hardly forbear to call it silly. There was not at that period a neuter noun in the language that did not form a possessive in 's with perfect freedom. Who can fancy Shakespeare doubting whether a table really had or possessed legs, as well as a horse or a man; or as being willing to say "a table's legs," but questioning the propriety of "a table on *its* legs"? or how were the Bible translators avoiding the ascription of possession to things inanimate by talking of "the candlestick, *his* shaft and *his* branch," and so forth, instead of "*its* shaft and *its* branch"?

If these, then, are fair specimens of our author's learning and method, we must expect to find his book characterized by ignorance of the history of English speech, inaccuracy, loose and unsound reasoning, and weakness of linguistic insight. And we are constrained to acknowledge that such expectations will be abundantly realized in the course of a further perusal of the work. Let us cite a few more specimens.

Perhaps the most striking example we can select of the Dean's want of knowledge on philological subjects is his treatment of the word *neighbor*. "This," he says (p. 12), "has come from the German *nachbar*!" but he adds in a foot-note that the derivation has been questioned; that a Danish correspondent thinks it should be referred to the Danish or Norse *nabo*; and he has himself chanced to observe "that the dictionaries derive it from the Anglo-Saxon *nehhyebur*." He does not venture to judge a matter of such intricacy, and simply leaves in

the text his original etymology from the German. This is very much as if we were to be in doubt whether to trace a friend's descent from his grandfather, or from one or other of his second-cousins, finally inclining to a certain cousin, because with him we ourselves happened to be also somewhat acquainted. Certainly one who can display such ignorance of the first principles of English etymology ought to be condemned to hold his peace forever on all questions concerning the English language.

The case is the same wherever a knowledge of the history of English words ought to be made of avail in discussing and deciding points of varying usage. Thus, when inquiring (p. 46 seq.) whether we ought to say *a historian* or *an historian*, and instancing the Bible use of *an* before initial *h* in almost all cases, he omits to point out that *an* is the original form, once used before both consonants and vowels, and that, when it came by degrees to be dropped before consonants, for the sake of a more rapid and easy utterance, it maintained itself longest before the somewhat equivocal aspiration, *h*. He is right, we think, in not regarding the rule for using *an* before the initial *h* of an unaccented syllable as a peremptory one. The better reason is on the side of the more popular colloquial usage; if the *h* of *historian*, like that of *history*, is to be really pronounced, made audible, *a* ought properly to stand before it, as before the other. But no Biblical support can make of such a combination as *an hero* aught but the indefensible revival of an antique and discarded way of speaking.

So, also, Dean Alford (p. 48) fails to see and to point out that, in the antiquated phrase *such an one*, we have a legacy from the time when *one* had not yet acquired its anomalous pronunciation *wŭn*, but was sounded *ōne* (as it still is in its compounds *ōnly*, *alōne*, *atōne*, etc.). As we now utter the word, *such an one* is not less absurd and worthy of summary rejection from usage than would be *such an wonder*.

The discussion, again, of "better than *I*" or "better than *me*" is carried on (p. 152 seq.) without an allusion to the fact that *than* is historically an adverb only, the same word with *then*, and has no hereditary right to govern an accusative, as if it were a preposition. "He is better *than I*" is, by origin, "he is better, *then I*," — that is to say, "I next after him." Linguistic usage has, indeed, a perfect right to turn the adverbial construction into a prepositional; but, as the former is still in almost every case not only admissible, but more usual, the tendency to convert the word into a preposition is not one to be encouraged, but rather, and decidedly, the contrary.

It might be deemed unfair to blame our author for his equally faulty discussion of the question between the two forms of locution, "it is *I*"

and "it is *me*," because his correspondents and the correspondents of some of the English literary journals (which have been the arena of a controversy upon the subject much more ardent than able, within no long time past) are just as far as he is from doing themselves credit in connection with it. What he cites from Latham and (in a note) from Ellis is tolerably pure twaddle. It may well enough be that "*it is me*" is now already so firmly established in colloquial usage, and even in written, that the attempt to oust it will be vain; but the expression is none the less in its origin a simple blunder, a popular inaccuracy. It is neither to be justified nor palliated by theoretical considerations, — as by alleging a special predicative construction, or citing French and Danish parallels. There was a time when to say "*us* did it" for "*we* did it," "*them* did it" for "*they* did it," was just as correct as to say "*you* did it" for "*ye* did it"; but usage, to which we must all bow as the only and indisputable authority in language, has ratified the last corruption and made it good English, while rejecting the other two. He would be a pedant who should insist in these days that we ought to say *ye* instead of *you* in the nominative; but he would also have been worthy of ridicule who, while the change was in progress, should have supported it on the ground of a tendency to the subjective use of the accusative, and cited in its favor the example of the Italian *loro*, "them," for *elleno*, "they," as plural of respectful address. And so long as it is still vulgar to say "it is *him*," it is *her*, it is *us*, it is *them*," and still proper and usual to say "it is *I*," our duty as favorers of good English requires us to oppose and discountenance "it is *me*," with the rest of its tribe, as all alike regrettable and avoidable solecisms.

Of course the Dean puts his veto (p. 253) upon *reliable*; men of his stamp always do. He alleges the staple argument of his class, that *rely-upon-able* would be the only legitimate form of such a derivative from *rely*. They ought fairly to put the case somewhat thus: "It is *unaccount-for-able*, not to say *laugh-at-able*, that men will try to force upon the language a word so *take-objection-to-able*, so little *avail-of-able*, and so far from *indispense-with-able*, as *reliable*"; then we should see more clearly how much the plea is worth.

Of course, again, our author sets his face like flint against writing *or* instead of *our* at the end of such words as *honor* and *favor*; and that upon the high and commanding consideration that to simplify the termination thus "is part of a movement to reduce our spelling to uniform rule as opposed to usage" (p. 10); that it "is an approach to that wretched attempt to destroy all the historic interest of our language, which is known by the name of *phonetic* spelling" (p. 14), — and upon the phonetic movement he proceeds to pour out the vials of his ponder-

ous wit and feeble denunciation. On the whole, we think the phonetists are to be congratulated on having the Dean for an adversary; his hostility is more a credit to them than would be his support. There are a host of difficulties in the way of the phonetic spellers which they themselves, or many of them, are far from appreciating; but they are not of the kind which Mr. Alford seeks to raise. No one wants to set up rule against usage, but only to change usage from a bad rule to a good one. And our language has a store of historic interest which would not be perceptibly trenched upon, even if we were to take the liberty of writing our words just as we speak them. Our present spelling is of the nature of a great and long-established institution, so intimately bound up with the habits and associations of the community that it is wellnigh or quite impregnable. But a philologist ought to be ashamed to defend it on principle, on theoretical grounds. He, at any rate, ought to know that a mode of writing is no proper repository for interesting historical reminiscences; that an alphabetic system has for its office simply and solely to represent faithfully a spoken language, and is perfect in proportion as it fulfils that office, without attempting to do also the duty of Egyptian hieroglyphs and Chinese ideographs. No other so great linguistic blessing could be conferred upon the English language and the people who speak it as a consistent phonetic orthography.

It is calculated profoundly to stagger our faith in Dean Alford's capacity as an interpreter and expositor of difficult texts to find him guilty of explaining (p. 105) the reflexive verb *to endeavor one's self* by "to consider one's self in duty bound," and of asserting that this "appears clearly" from the answer made by the candidate for ordination to the bishop's exhortation to diligence in prayer and other holy exercises, "I will *endeavor myself* so to do, the Lord being my helper." Not only does this answer exact no such interpretation of the phrase as the one given by the Dean, but it even directly and obviously suggests the true meaning, "to exert one's self, to do one's endeavor."

A similar paucity of insight is exhibited in our author's theory (p. 86), that the origin of the double comparative *lesser*, for *less*, is to be traced to the "attraction" of the dissyllabic word *greater*, with which it is not infrequently found connected in use. No such effect of attraction as this, we are sure, can be found in any part of our English speech. The true reason of the form is not hard to discover: it lies in the extension of a prevailing analogy to one or two exceptional cases. *Less* and *worse* are the only comparatives in our language which do not end in *r*; and *er* is accordingly so distinctly present to the apprehension of the language-users as sign of comparative meaning that they have gone on,

naturally enough, to apply it to those two also, thus assimilating them to the rest of their class. The only difference in the result is, that *lesser* has been fully adopted, in certain connections, into good usage, while *worser* is still almost a vulgarity, though employed now and then by writers of undoubted authority.

Nor can we ascribe any greater merit to the Dean's treatment of the preposition *on to* or *onto*, used to denote motion, as distinguished from locality or place, denoted by the simple preposition *on* : thus, "The cat jumped *on to* the table, and danced about *on* the table." Such a distinction, as every one knows, is often made in colloquial style, but is not yet, and perhaps may never be, admitted in good writing ; this tolerates only *on*. Our author is not content with denying that *on to* is now good writable English ; he tries to make out that there is no reason or propriety in attempting to express any such difference of relation as is signified by the two separate forms. His argument is this : if we say, "The cat jumped *on* the table," or if the tired school-boy, begging a lift on his way, gets from the coachman the permission, "All right, jump *on* the box," will there be any danger of a failure to understand what is meant ? Of course not, we reply ; but neither should we fail to understand, "The dog jumped *in* the water, and brought out the stick " ; nor would Tom be slow in taking, and acting on, coachee's meaning, if the reply were, "Jump *in* the carriage." The question is not one of mere intelligibility, but of the desirableness of giving formal expression to a real difference of relation, — as we have actually done in the case of *in* and *into*. *On to*, says our author (p. 181), is not so good English as *into*, "because *on* is ordinarily a preposition of motion as well as of rest, whereas *in* is almost entirely a preposition of rest." This is an amusing inversion of the real relations of the case : in fact, *in* is a preposition of rest only, because we have *into* in good usage as corresponding preposition of motion ; *on* is obliged to be both, because *onto* has not won its way to general acceptance. The double form would be just as proper and just as expressive in the one case as in the other, and there is no good reason why we should not heartily wish that *onto* were as unexceptionable English as *into*, whether we believe or not that it will ever become so, and whether or not we are disposed to take the responsibility of joining to make it so. Every German scholar knows how nice and full of meaning are the distinctions made in the German language, as regards these two and a few other prepositions, by the use after them of a dative to denote locality and an accusative to denote motion. The Anglo-Saxon was able to accomplish the same object by the same means ; but we have, in losing our dative case, lost the power to do so, and have only partially made up the loss, by coining, during the modern

period, such secondary words as *into* and *onto*, that they may bear a part of the office of *in* and *on*.

We will barely allude to one or two more instances of a like character: such are our author's conjecture (p. 67) that our separation of *mānifold* in pronunciation from *many* is due to the influence of its felt analogy with *mānifest*; his attempt (p. 91) to find an etymological reason for the translation, "Our Father *which* art in heaven," instead of "*who* art"; his theory (p. 42) that the conjunction of the two words "humble and hearty" in the Prayer-Book is good ground for holding that the first as well as the second was pronounced with an aspirated *h*; his apparent assumption (p. 25) that the *'s* of *senator's* represents the Latin *'s* of *senatoris* (or is it only his confused expression that is to blame here?), — and so forth.

These are but the more prominent and striking illustrations of Dean Alford's general method. We may say without exaggeration that — especially in the first half of the book, where questions are more often dealt with that include historical considerations and call for some scholarship — there is hardly a single topic brought under discussion which is treated in a thorough and satisfactory manner, in creditable style and spirit: even where we are agreed with our author's conclusions, he repels us by a superficial, or incomplete, or prejudiced, or blundering statement of the reasons that should guide us to them. It is almost an impertinence in one so little versed in English studies to attempt to teach his countrymen how they ought to speak, and why.

The last half of the work deals prevailingly with syntactical points, requiring to be argued rather upon rhetorical than grammatical grounds. But, though in a measure exempt from the class of criticisms which we have found occasion to make above, it is not without its own faults. The Dean's chief hobby throughout is the depreciation of "laws," whether of the rhetorician or of the grammarian, and the exaltation of "usage" as opposed to them. He has, of course, a certain right on his side, yet not precisely as he understands it. The laws he rejects are only meant to stand as expressions of good usage; nor do those who set them up arrogate to them peremptory and universal force, but rather a value as guiding principles, attention to which will save from many faults the less wary and skillful. No one holds that he who has not native capacity and educated taste can become by their aid an elegant writer; no one denies that he who has capacity and taste may cast them to the winds, sure that his own sense of what is right will lead him to clear and forcible expression. But we have all heard of a class of people who inveigh against "laws," and would fain escape judgment by them; and the very vigor of the Dean's recalcitrations inspires us with suspi-

cious that there may be good cause for his uneasiness. And so it is: he has not in any eminent degree that fine sense which enables one to write without rule a pure and flowing English. His style is always heavy and ungraceful, and often marked with infelicities and even inaccuracies. As many of our readers are aware, he has received on this score a terrible scathing from Mr. Moon, in a little work happily entitled "The Dean's English," by way of answer to "The Queen's English." To this we refer any one who may be curious to see the other side of his claim to set himself up as a critic of good English properly exposed. The professed general views he puts forth are in no small part special pleadings, rather, against the criticisms of his censors. He appears to suppose that any somewhat inaccurate or slovenly phrase or construction of his for which he can find parallels in our Bible translation and in Shakespeare is thereby hallowed and made secure against attack, unmindful that our style of expression has in many points tended toward precision and nicety during the last centuries, so that not everything which was allowed in Shakespeare's time will be tolerated now; and further, and more especially, that great writers may be pardoned in taking now and then liberties which, if ventured on by little men, like him and ourselves, will be justly visited with reprobation.

It is our opinion, therefore, upon the whole, that the English-speaking public would have lost little had our author's lucubrations been confined to the "Church of England Young Men's Literary Association," for which they were originally intended, and which doubtless received them with unquestioning faith, and had he never brought them out where Dissenters and other irreverent outsiders should carp at them. The circulation and credit they have won in this country are mainly a reflection of the unusual attention which has been paid them in England; and the latter is partly fortuitous, the result of a combination of favoring circumstances, partly due to the general interest felt in the subject of the work, and a curiosity to hear what a man of high position and repute for scholarship has to say upon it; and in part it is an indication of the general low state of philological culture in the British Isles. We cannot wish "The Queen's English" a continued currency, unless it be understood and received by all for just what it is, — a simple expression of the views and prejudices of a single educated Englishman respecting matters of language; having, doubtless, a certain interest and value as such, but possessing no more authority than would belong to a like expression on the part of any one among thousands of its readers. Its true character is that of a sample of private opinion, not a guide and model of general usage.